

## THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2017

A quick scan over my calendar for December reveals that the pace will not slow between now and the end of the year. Each weeknight has been a 'night out' for several consecutive weeks now – and the next few are assuming the same shape.

Here is a selection of:

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN DECEMBER

- **Carol Singing:** 6 December @ 7.00pm: Bloomfields | 19 December @ 6.30pm: Malton Fold; 7.30pm: Pines
- 13 December @ 8.00pm: Philippines Deputation Meeting (Mr Noel Stevenson)
- 14 December @ 7.30pm: **Christmas Carol Service**  
(Jubilee Church - please invite family and friends)
- 15 December @ 7.00pm: Martyrs **Christmas Dinner**
- 17 December @ 7.00pm: Carol Service
- 31 December @ 10.30pm: **Watchnight Service**



## MEETINGS TODAY

- Sunday School/Bible Class – 10.15am | Bible Class – 3.10pm (Rev. Foster) | Sandy Row SS – 3.10pm.
- Morning Worship – 11.30am: *7th Message in the Galatians Series* | Evening Service – 7.00pm (Rev. Wesley Graham).

## INSPIRATION IN A SENTENCE

*“Justification is the article where the church stand or falls.”*  
[ Martin Luther ]

*“Justification is the soul of Christianity and the fountainhead of all true comfort and sanctification. He who errs in this doctrine errs to his eternal destruction.”* [ Wilhelmus a Brakel ]



## CHRISTMAS AT THE REFORMATION ROOMS

The last 'Open Days' for the Luther 500 Exhibition this year will be staged this week in the Martyrs. Doors will open at 7:00pm on Monday 4 December and again on Thursday 7 December. The plan is to do a tour 'on the hour' – starting at 7.00, 8.00, and the final one beginning at 9.00pm. These evenings and timings may allow some to fit in a little trip to Belfast's Christmas Market en route!

Tours will be led by our guides dressed in 'the Wittenberg way.' And as an extra bonus, special edible 'Reformation' treats will be provided! Please don't miss out – and if you can bring family and friends along, by all means do. They are guaranteed to enjoy – and hopefully be educated too!



## BEWITCHED FROM BELIEVING

Text: **Galatians 3:1-9**.

There is only one Bible, which presents one God and one Gospel that brings men to Him. This is the foundation of Paul's argument against the Judaisers – the false teachers in his day (cf. **Romans 10; Hebrews 4:2; Galatians 3**). As Galatians is considered to be Paul's first epistle, this is the first time he articulates this vital argument.

### [1] THE INCRIMINATION OF THEIR FAITH; 3:1.

In the terms, “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,*” there is more than a hint at the **(a) DELUSION** that had come over them. By his double use of the word “foolish” in **verses 1 and 3** to describe these Greeks, Paul is taking careful aim at their biggest boast: they imagined they possessed superior wisdom to others (cf. **1 Corinthians 1:22**); Paul spotlights their delusion.

**(b) DEPARTURE from the faith** was the result of this delusion. Though they had received a plain and powerful presentation of the Gospel of Christ – “*before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you*” – they wished to add their conduct to its content. However to add works to faith is a betrayal of the Gospel.

### [2] THE INTERROGATION REGARDING THEIR FAITH; 3:1-5.

To ascertain where a problem exists it is always beneficial to pose some searching questions. This is the practice that Paul adopts in **Galatians 3:1-5**. In order to challenge their faith, he presents five questions that are rhetorical in their nature as they are really asked for effect with no answer expected:

(i) **3:1: Who is influencing you?**  
“*Bewitch*” is “to charm as with an evil eye”: the Galatians had

been deluded into thinking that a false gospel of works was better than the true Gospel of grace.

(ii) **3:2: How were you saved?**

Was salvation produced by the Holy Spirit, or by the tables of the Law? In understanding Scripture we must remember that Passover (redemption by blood) always preceded Sinai (rulebook for living). God does not bring us to Himself via our graft but through His grace.

(iii) **3:3: How is the work of the Holy Spirit developed in you?**

The biblical emphasis is on a Person, not a programme; about a relationship, not a list of rules. (cf. **Philippians 3:8-10; Hebrews 12:1-3**).

(iv) **3:4: Has your suffering been completely unnecessary?**

In the areas in Galatia to which Paul took his message, Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra, Paul drew persecution as a result (**Acts 13:50; 14:2-5; 14:19**). His point is: if a man can be justified before God by doing the works of the law, why put yourself in the way of reproach by announcing a message the Jews deemed “wicked” and the Greeks counted as “foolishness”?!

(v) **3:5: Does God only work in response to what we deserve?**

Much in the manner of collecting tokens for a toy, or air miles for a flight, does God only respond in power when we accrue a suitable amount of works?

### [3] THE ILLUSTRATION OF THEIR FAITH; 3:6-9.

Though a main plank in the argument presented by the Judaisers was that they alone were being loyal to the Old Testament scriptures, the apostle dips into the very centre of Moses' writings to establish the fact that, just like the New Testament saints, Abraham too was justified by faith alone. He demonstrates this by a citation of **Genesis 15:6** and the corresponding point made by **Romans 15:6**: it was through faith that Abraham was justified, not by works. This justification occurred before any Jewish ritual was performed (cf. **Genesis 17:24**).

Which illuminates Paul's chief point: the fact that Abraham was justified by faith alone reveals that there is **one Gospel for both testaments** and only one way of entrance into eternal life and God's heaven.